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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - FUTENMA RELOCATION

¶1. LEAD STORIES: All Monday morning papers gave top or front-page play to the victory of an anti-U.S. base candidate in the mayoral election in Nago, Okinawa, on Sunday.

¶2. "Henoko Plan Still the Best Option" The moderate Yomiuri argued in an editorial (1/25): "The resolution of the Futenma relocation issue has become more difficult following the victory in the Nago mayoral election of a candidate who is opposed to the existing relocation plan and calls for relocating the base out of Okinawa.... Compared to other options and despite the election result, the existing relocation plan is the most viable option. The GOJ should not give up on the existing plan, as it has made a pledge to the U.S. to settle the issue by May.... If Japan fails to find an alternative site, the serious noise pollution and dangerous situation at MCAS Futenma will remain unchanged for years. U.S.-Japan relations will likely deteriorate and reach crisis level.... In order to improve the current situation, the GOJ must search for a plan that may not be perfect but is agreeable to the relevant parties."

¶3. "Local Opinion against Henoko Plan Carries Weight" The liberal Mainichi editorialized (1/25): "The victory of a candidate who has clearly stated his opposition to the Henoko plan will likely have a great political impact on the Futenma relocation issue.... There is an argument that diplomatic and security issues should not be affected by the results of local elections because those issues involve basic policies of the state. However, the reality of politics is that the GOJ will have to respect the opinion of the local residents who reject the existing relocation plan in its review of

the agreed upon plan.... If the Hatoyama administration fails to fulfill the pledge to reach a conclusion by May that it made during the recent U.S.-Japan foreign ministerial meeting, U.S.-Japan relations might deteriorate further."

¶4. "Process to Select Alternative Site outside Okinawa Must be Accelerated" The liberal Asahi wrote in an editorial (1/25): "The issue of Futenma relocation is related to national security, thus the GOJ should take full responsibility for its judgment on the issue. However, Prime Minister Hatoyama should take the result of the mayoral election seriously because he has stated that he would respect not only the significance of the U.S.-Japan agreement but also the sentiments of the people of Okinawa. The prime minister, who has pledged that he will settle the Futenma issue by the end of May, must do everything within his power to find a new candidate site."

ZUMWALT